

Target fixation: a common hazard for motorcycle enthusiasts and drivers

By Brad Waugh

Most motorcycle riders have hit debris or bumps on the road that they saw but just couldn't break their fixation, so they hit them. The same type of fixation is cause for car drivers running into motorcyclists who are in their field of view.

A Texas DPS trooper friend told me of his early career as a trooper in far West Texas. There was a stretch of road where about 70 miles was uninterrupted, flat, straight highway with one lone solitary tree. Several times per year, someone would run off the road and hit this tree. His first reaction was that they must be the most luckless people alive because on

that entire stretch of road, they had picked this spot to run off the road. Upon serious pondering of what could be done to prevent this occurrence, he realized that the tree was what was causing the accidents.

The same is usually the situation when a motorcycle hits an object. The cause is because the rider is looking at the object and rides where the eyes are looking. From birth, we are taught to look at things. One of the first things taught in rider safety courses is to "look through a turn," that is, look ahead to where we are going to see any obstacles or objects in the path we want to take.

Let's take that idea further. A motorcycle rider will go where the eyes go. Try taking a ride on a fairly long straight road with little traffic. Look at some object on

the right and fix your gaze upon it for no more than two seconds and you will find you have drifted that direction. Don't take any longer to do it than that or you may be in real trouble.

Townes Van Zandt wrote in a song that "we all have holes to fill, them holes is all that's real!" Practice looking for "holes." When changing lanes, have you ever tried to ride between the stripes? It takes some close concentration to successfully avoid riding on the stripes when doing it repeatedly. The reason is because we focus on the stripes instead of the "holes" between them. This is the same as riding through traffic. If riders can consciously learn to watch for the

openings, rather than the objects, there will be far fewer injuries and accidents. Learning to seek the openings rather than fixing upon the objects will aid in evasive maneuvers. Practice this and you will see a definite difference and enjoy many more years of happy motorcycling!

Texas Department of Public Safety offers sanctioned rider safety courses at San Jacinto College (281- 476-1838) and Alvin Community College (281-388-4904). Additionally you can visit the Texas Department of Public Transportation Motorcycle Safety Web page at <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/msb/index.htm> ■



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oxygen for the Command Module *Odyssey* was cut off and the three astronauts had to take refuge in the Lunar Module *Aquarius*. Dr. Sjoberg was responsible for directing the operation of the flight support complex. He worked with the flight controllers through the analysis and identification of the problems as they developed, and in devising and testing solutions. Through the work of the astronauts, flight controllers, and engineers, the Apollo 13 crew was safely returned to the Earth.

In recognition of his expert technical and managerial abilities, Dr. Sjoberg was appointed deputy director of the Johnson Space Center in January 1972, a position

he held until his retirement in 1979. As the deputy director, Sjoberg had collateral responsibility for the overall management and direction of JSC functions, programs, and resources, including: flight mission operations, medical research and operations, flight crew training and support, science and applications programs such as the Earth Resources Program, the design, development and testing of docking systems for the Apollo-Soyuz Test Program, and the design and development of the Space Shuttle Program.

Former Center Director Chris Kraft, under whom Sig worked as deputy director, remembers Sig as "a great personal friend for 57 years of my life.

He had the ability to visualize the internal workings of people, ideas, and systems. People were willing to listen to him and work with him. He could always tell me if things weren't done right. When I was worried about something, I would ask Sig to look into it. I always wanted him to be part of what was going on with me. Sig was a major contributor to the success of the Johnson Space Center. This country owes a great deal to him for his contributions to the space program."

His numerous awards and decorations include: The Medal of Freedom presented by President Nixon in 1970 for the Apollo 13 Mission Operations Team, the NASA Distinguished Service Medal,

NASA MSC Certificate of Commendation, NASA Exceptional Service Medal (received twice), and NASA MSC Superior Achievement Award. He also received an Outstanding Achievement Award from the University of Minnesota and an honorary doctor of science degree from DePauw University. He was a fellow of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics; a United States delegate to the Federation Aeronautique Internationale, Astronautics Committee; and a fellow of the American Astronautical Society.

Survivors include his wife, Betty, and three sons, Eric, Stephen, and Robert. ■